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**Christ's Power To Save From Sin**  
Sermon by Rev. Wm. Dobson, Pastor of First Methodist Church.

Can Christianity Cope With the Evil of the World—Christ's Methods—the Manifestations of Human Badness—Christ's, Methods Can Save.

Text:—Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another. Matt. 11. 3.  
The setting of the text is very simple. John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the Christ. He was a man of the desert, an ascetic, and his conception of the coming Christ seems to have been taken largely of his own constitutional peculiarities. To John the Baptist, the coming of the Christ loomed up as a tremendous crisis. In his thought the abstract righteousness of God was to be applied to every day life; the Christ was to separate the wicked from the just; or to use John's own figure, his fan was to be in his hand; He was to thoroughly purge His floor and to gather His wheat into the garner, but the chaff was to be burned with unquenchable fire. John saw the axe lying at the foot of the tree and concluded that every tree that brought forth good fruit was to be hewn down and cast into the fire.  
Such was John's conception of the coming Christ. But when Jesus entered upon His public ministry there was neither axe, nor fan, nor fire, but with a nature gentle as a woman's. He went everywhere doing good. He healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, cleansed the leper, raised the dead and fed the hungry multitudes. John is in prison now beneath the halls of Herod's palace. Some one brings him word of the teachings and works of Jesus, and they are entirely out of harmony with John's conception of what they ought to be. He calls two of his disciples and sends them to Jesus with the query on their lips, "Art thou He that should come or do we look for another?"

John the Baptist had wholly misunderstood the methods and purpose of the Christ. To help him in his difficulty Jesus sent to the disciples of John "Go show John again those things which ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them, and blessed is the whosoever shall not be offended in me." That is to say blessed is he who shall not stumble or misunderstand Christ's methods of bringing the world back to God and saving men from their sins. This is the setting of the text. Let us leave it there.  
I think I see a striking analogy between John's misconception of the Christ, and our own. It is this subject that I want to talk out with you for a short time this evening. It will start such questions as these. Has Jesus of Nazareth made the last analysis of human wants or necessities, or can a deeper one yet be made? Or let us state the same question in another way.  
Are the methods and power of Jesus Christ sufficient to save a man from his sins and his sinfulness, are they sufficient to save the city, the nation, and civilize the world, or are we to look to some other means? Is Christianity as taught by Jesus Christ sufficient to cope with the evil of the world, or are we to throw around it a score of societies, and spend millions of money in diplomacy and fraud, in order to assist Christianity to civilize and save the world?

In dealing with these questions we shall have to remind ourselves of the fact that man with whom Christianity has to do, in his deepest nature is an epitome of all that is contained in mind and matter; that is to say, there is nothing in the inorganic world that you and I are not carrying about with us in epitome every day on the streets of Charlottetown.  
Our physical nature has its origin there. When we come up into the organic kingdom the same holds true. We are closely related to every flower under the mountain side as well as to the oak that has defied the storms of a thousand years.  
When we enter the animal kingdom we find ourselves to possess everything that is peculiar to the animal—instinct, love of home, courage, patriotism, subtlety, and all that belongs to the animal nature.  
So we ascend through the intellectual, moral, and spiritual natures until in some way we are allied to God.  
Now it is very clear, to me at least, that whatever scheme can bring this being that we call man into perfect harmony with himself, into right relations with fellow-men and God, so that he will feel at home in the universe, is not dealing with an isolated case but is dealing with the world's problem; and if Christianity can accomplish this, then Jesus Christ has made the last analysis. He has solved the world's problem.  
Now this is just exactly what Christianity professes to be and to do. Jesus Christ has risked his divinity on saying that He can save the lost, and God has pledged himself to save unto the uttermost all them that come unto Him through Christ. Yes, more, the nature of this salvation is such that each individual under its influence may become in moral character like that man of Nazareth, for, "Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son." Now I do not say that Christianity is doing this either for the individual or for the nation, but I do say that this is what it claims to do; and if it is not able to meet this claim then Jesus was either mistaken or a fraud, and succeeded in deceiving His disciples. On the other hand, if Christianity can meet its claims, it doesn't want

the aid of a hundred and one societies outside of it, nor does it require that you and I shall do evil in order to assist it in meeting its claims.  
Now let us turn our attention for a few moments to Christ's methods which John the Baptist evidently supposed to be inadequate to Christ's purpose, and about which you and I, I suspect have a similar opinion.  
In order to appreciate Christ's methods of saving the world, we shall have for a moment to remind ourselves of the cause of the world's misery. I think it may be conceded without discussion that a good deal of the world's misery grows out of human ignorance. We do a great many things ignorantly, but there is a righteousness lying at the heart of things which compels us to enjoy or suffer, as the case may be, the consequences. I may eat that in all good faith, which causes pain, which may terminate in death, but I was wholly ignorant of its effects. I may enter into some business transaction in all good faith, but on account of my ignorance, of a hundred things, that transaction may drive me through the bankrupt court, and compel me to suffer all the shame and inconvenience consequent upon it.  
So you may carry the same thoughts through all human society. This suffering, Christianity does not profess to do anything with. If it is ever done away with at all, it will have to be overcome by experience and education.  
But the suffering that springs from human ignorance is not after all the great heartache of the world. This is the outcome of what the Bible and the theologians call sin, and sin flows from human sinfulness as naturally as the stream flows from its fountain.  
This of course is a very orthodox putting of the truth, but to most of us it doesn't mean much. This arises principally from the fact that sin, sinners and sinfulness are Bible words and belong as well to theology and for two thousand years they have been surrounded by the fires of controversy until the sharpness of their meaning has melted away. So true is this, that there is nothing remarkable in seeing a whole congregation on their knees asking the Lord to have mercy upon us miserable sinners, any one of whom if left in cold blood that he was a miserable sinner, would resent it with indignation. I do not say he would sue for libel, for the statement is not actionable, but he would have no hesitation in telling you that he was just as good as you were.  
Suppose we translate the word sinfulness by any English word that has no other meaning, by a word so clear in its meaning when applied to morals that it strikes on the ear like the stroke of a bell. Say that sinfulness is nothing more or less than human badness. So true is this that when you see a man or woman passing your door whom you know to cherish badness in the heart with the consent of the will, and allow that badness to manifest itself in action, you are not only stating a truth but are using good English if you say, "That is a bad man or a bad woman." Such an expression hurts, not because it says anything that is bad, but because the words bad and badness have not lost their full meaning.

Now human badness like electricity may manifest itself in a thousand different ways, but always along the lines of least resistance. It is this line of least resistance that gives such a tremendous emphasis to the law of heredity. As a general rule the line of least resistance in you and me has been handed down to us from our forefathers. If they were dishonest, that tendency is likely to be found in us, if they were kind and gentle we are likely to be so.  
Human badness, like electricity again, manifests itself in such a variety of ways that it requires much observation and a careful study in order to trace the different manifestations to the same source.  
In this globe above my head, the electricity is forcing its way through the non-conducting carbon, and the friction is so great as to bring the carbon to a white heat, but all we can see at the present is the light. That is one way electricity manifests itself. I was waiting the other day in the station for a train when there were half a dozen telegraphic machines, each one keeping up its own peculiar ticking or noise, until the place became almost intolerable to one who is not used to it. It would be quite a difficult thing for a person not acquainted with electricity, to see my connection between that noise and the light that is lighting the church tonight. Yet they both spring from the same source; they were both manifestations of the same thing and at the bottom were of the same value.  
So it is with human badness. One man gets angry and swears viciously—that is one manifestation of human badness. Another commits murder for the sake of money, or to gratify revenge—another manifestation of the same thing. At first sight we see very little connection between swearing and murder, but like the noise and the light of electricity, they are only manifestations of the same thing. One man takes advantage of your ignorance in the market in order to get something for nothing, another man will forge notes and deeds, for the same purpose. They do not just look alike in their manifestations but they have the same ethical value. One man may take advantage

the statute of limitation in order to get something for nothing, another man run a bucket shop for the same ethical value.  
So you may go on through the whole catalogue. What is called hoodluming in politics, graft in trade, lawlessness and libertinism, traced back like the branches of a tree are found to have their origin in one parent stem, and that stem is human badness.  
I am not saying that from a civic and economic point of view; these manifestations may not have different values, this phase of it I am not discussing tonight, but from an ethical point of view, murder and swearing, beating down over the counter with the intention of getting something for nothing and forging names for the sake of money, all receive their value from their source.  
They are only different manifestations of the same thing along the line of least resistance, and that thing is human badness.  
These things being so, it is quite evident that any scheme that will rid human nature of its badness or sinfulness has mastered the world's problem. As we have said this is just exactly what Jesus Christ claimed to do for man. It has been written that "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things have passed away and behold all things have become new." We are told that through the promises we may become partakers of the divine nature, so much so that we may reckon ourselves dead unto sin and alive unto righteousness, having the mind in things that was in Christ Jesus. Take these things out of Christianity, and you have reduced it to a cult, a creed or a theology; but it is none of these, it is a power of God unto salvation to take the badness out of the human heart.

Now suppose Christianity were to do this for you and for me and for all the male inhabitants of Charlottetown, what would be the result? Would you have any bucket shops, any gambling saloons, any Sunday parades for spectacular purposes? I think not. To have the mind in us that was in Christ is to see things in their moral values as He saw them, and to adjust ourselves to the right and wrong as He did. Christianity pledges itself to stop the fountain and thus dry up the streams.  
Further: the methods of Christianity are very simple. Christianity simply asks us to turn away from bad actions with a full determination to be good men and women; and Jesus Himself has assured us that if we do this God will give us for all our past bad transactions, that is to say He will treat us as if we had never gone wrong and bring us into such relations to Himself as will enable Him to pour into our natures all the grace that has been provided for, thus gradually cleansing us from the bad which we have inherited and cultivated.  
Thus it seems to me that Christianity not only possesses the power to save men, but Christ taught us the methods by which that power was to be applied. And when applied according to His methods it is not only able to save the individual, but cleanse the cities, and civilize and Christianize the world. I for one at least do not believe that it requires any auxiliary societies to make it effective, nor does it require commerce or war to go before it in order to clear its way. Even more than this, I am firmly convinced that those would-be auxiliaries instead of being a help have always proved a hindrance. How much time we spend in these, how much energy is dissipated, how much money expended. So much so in thousands of cases that we scarcely have time or inclination to put ourselves into such relations to God that He may come into our lives and take the badness out of our individual heart.  
Now in conclusion, let us ask ourselves this question. Why is it that we will expend so much time and energy, intellect and money upon almost anything else but Christianity? Are yet most of us believe while we are doing these things that Christianity alone can save the soul, civilize the world and bring humanity back to God. Or have we grown sceptical, have we misconceived the Christ and said with John the Baptist "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"

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